

**STATE BOARD MEETING DATE**

May 21, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of Review Case # C-2006-044R, Rhonda Payne

**SUBMITTED BY:** Charles Easaw, Chief Investigator, Investigative Unit, State Board of Education

**MANAGEMENT TEAM REVIEW:** May 3, 2007

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Rhonda Payne applied for a Learning Disability Special Education teaching certificate on February 27, 2006. On her application for certification, Ms. Payne answered “yes” to the question pertaining to having received a reprimand or disciplinary action involving a professional certification or license. In her statement, Ms. Payne disclosed that in 1992 she was convicted of an Alcohol/Drunk in Public charge, and one count of Possession of Cocaine Paraphernalia.

Ms. Payne was contacted by the Investigative Unit because she did not include details of the circumstances that led to her arrests. Additionally, in her application, she indicated that she had received a reprimand or other disciplinary action involving a professional certification or license. She did not provide information regarding the action taken against her license. Ms Payne submitted an additional statement in which she stated, “When she checked the answer no it was a mistake.” She also stated, “She never intended to misinform.”

On June 24, 2002, she was denied a certificate by the Pennsylvania Department of Education for failure to reveal a conviction. She had answered “no” to question: Have you ever been convicted of a crime classified as a misdemeanor or felony? On February 2, 2004 she applied again for a different certificate and was subsequently approved.

On February 14, 2007, the PPAC conducted a review of Ms. Payne’s application. The PPAC found that Ms. Payne’s conduct constituted immoral and unprofessional conduct. The PPAC unanimously recommends that the Board deny Rhonda Payne’s application for certificate renewal, based on the following:

Aggravating factors:

- On two separate occasions, Ms. Payne failed to disclose prior criminal conduct on professional certification applications
- Admission of a teacher contract break in Pennsylvania
- Admitted to abusing substances while employed as a teacher in Pennsylvania

Mitigating factors:

- The applicant has gone through the process to address her addiction to substances
- By her own avowal she has remained free from substance abuse for the last thirteen years
- Letters of recommendation submitted on her behalf

**BOARD ACTION REQUESTED: [ ] INFORMATION [X] ACTION/DESCRIBED  
BELOW:**

That the Board accept the findings of facts, conclusions of law, and recommendation of the PPAC and deny Ms. Payne's application for certification for the reason that she engaged in unprofessional conduct.

**ATTACHMENTS: YES [X] NO [ ]**